

Diversifying Research Libraries: Encouraging the Academic Success of Minority Students

Latisha Reynolds

University of Louisville Libraries

Why is a diverse library staff important?

- The staff should be a reflection of the university community and community at large
- In order for libraries to remain relevant and vital to students and the community
- To reflect changing demographics
- To support the academic success of students

Statistics

- Although the number of minorities grows each year, the number of minority librarians has dwindled in the U.S. and in the state
- According to an article in the ALA/APA Library Worklife newsletter, In 1998, 9 out of 10 librarians were Caucasian
- The number of librarians overall dropped by 3%, but the number of African-Americans dropped by 26.7% and the number of Native-Americans dropped by 22.6%

<http://www.ala-apa.org/newsletter/vol1no4/recruitment.html>

Statistics

- The number of African-American librarians in Kentucky dropped from 160 in 1980 to 25 in 2004

Recruiting a Diverse Work Force

- Although the statistics paint a dark picture, there are efforts being made to improve diversity recruitment in our universities
- Universities around the state are working within their schools and forming partnerships with others in order to foster change

Minority Internship Program

- For the past few years U of L has partnered with UK to provide an internship that provides tuition for UK's library science program in addition to full time employment with the U of L Libraries
- The internship lasts up to three years with the goal of full employment after the internship has been completed.

Personal Experiences

- *The internship has given me a chance to work on my degree and actually do the work of a librarian at the same time. I have had the experience of teaching information literacy classes, serving at the reference desk, compiling web topic guides, working in a team environment, and even chairing a committee. I have also found that having the support and encouragement of my co-workers has been invaluable.*

-Latisha Reynolds

Personal Experiences

- *My experiences as a library intern have been excellent in every respect. Kornhauser is a much smaller library than Ekstrom, and has afforded me the opportunity to work in a number of areas including: reference, circulation, interlibrary loan, and technical services. It has enabled me to gain first hand knowledge of the various careers available within the library, in addition to the specialized skills and training required in the field of medical librarianship.*

-John Chenault

Reaching Out and Pulling In- Exposing Students to the Profession

- R.O.C. Mentoring Program
- STLP program
- Encouraging and educating student employees
- Career Fairs

U of L Libraries Diversity Task Force

- The U of L Libraries recently formed a diversity task force to coordinate and monitor diversity initiatives in the areas of employee diversity, diversity education for employees and curricular, and programmatic diversity
- This is a part of the university's overall plan to create a more diverse campus

Diversity Retention

- The literature indicates that it is not only important to have a plan to recruit but a plan to retain staff also
- An article by Linda Murser in the Journal of Library Administration revealed that although librarians and libraries believe that retention is important, more than 50% of libraries surveyed had no formal programs or initiatives for retaining staff

Diversity Retention

- Less than 10% of libraries had mentoring programs or professional development opportunities

Measuring Retention

- One tool that can be used for retention is the exit survey.
- A good survey can actually provide pertinent information to support retention
- Another approach includes doing satisfaction and climate surveys to measure efforts before the employee decides to leave

Strategies to Retain Staff

- The American Management Association lists six factors that are most effective in retention of employees. These include:
 - Mentoring
 - Career and learning opportunities
 - Networking
 - Good benefits
 - Balance (work/home)
 - Challenging work

Conclusion

- By recruiting a diverse staff and retaining that staff we can help to create libraries that are more welcoming, understanding, relevant, and equipped to support the academic success of our students